



PIGMENTATION

EXOGENOUS OCHRONOSIS: A THERAPEUTIC PARADOX & DILEMMA

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Background: Exogenous ochronosis is a localized paradoxical hyperpigmentation of the skin due to prolonged use of bleaching agents containing hydroquinone. In India, hydroquinone is widely used by patients without a prescription.

Observation: A 58 year-old Indian female presented with dark grey-black patch localized on the left cheek. She gave history of prolonged use of a topical formulation containing 2 % hydroquinone on a pre existing small dark patch on the left cheek as suggested by her beautician. She applied the formulation twice a day for 7 months without following up or visiting any doctor. On examination there was a dark grey-black hyperpigmentation localized to the area where the formulation was applied. Rest of the skin examination was unremarkable.

Investigations: Dermoscopy was performed on the areas with ochronosis which showed amorphous densely pigmented structures obliterating some follicular openings. Skin Biopsy was done which revealed ochre-colored fibers in the dermis, and homogenization of the collagen fibers in the dermis

A diagnosis of exogenous ochronosis due to prolonged use of 2% topical hydroquinone was made.

Key message: This case is being presented to emphasize the importance of educating and highlighting the side effect of prolonged application of hydroquinone formulations among patients and treating physicians. Exogenous ochronosis is a therapeutic dilemma and it is for this reason it is very important to detect it early so the Hydroquinone cream can be discontinued immediately. The indiscriminate use of formulations containing hydroquinone without prescriptions is increasing multi fold without any health regulating authorities to check its use due to rise in the number of Cosmetic Skin Clinics run by Non-Dermatologists.

